



American Legion - Department of Michigan

Today, the average Michigan American Legion Post has 200 members with 467 Posts statewide.

Today's 93,000 member Michigan American Legion began its journey when Colonel Fred M. Alger was appointed Chairman of the Michigan Temporary Committee of the New York meeting in April 1919, under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt Jr. There, they crystallized the idea of American Legion of World War I veterans, both male and female, developed at the Paris, France Caucus on February 16, 1919.

On May 17, 1919, application was made to the Michigan Patriotic Fund for money to organize assistance for 160,000 Michigan World War I veterans to obtain employment or financial assistance as necessary. The Fund Trustees then allotted \$25,000 as the Department's first treasury. Today, the Department is grateful for the continuing annual state grant that provides the financial base upon which we operate our statewide Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program.

On August 1, 1920, the American Legion, Department of Michigan, received its permanent charter from the national organization and was incorporated under a 1921 State Charter. Originally headquartered in Detroit, the physical headquarters relocated to Lansing in 1974, while maintaining a Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation office in Detroit.

The Department's first ever resolution was a statement of partisan politics neutrality. This basic principle continues. Legislatively, the Department of Michigan enjoys a continuing positive working relationship with the Michigan Legislature. It continues to champion veterans issues, not political parties, a policy that mirrors the national American Legion organization's relationship with the United States Congress.

Since its origins, the Department of Michigan and its posts have provided the opportunity for assistance to untold numbers of citizens while providing for their children's participation in progressive youth programs. To demonstrate, I present several 2004 totals based on only half of our 467 posts reporting.

Community Service Programs totaled \$560, 868

Cash aid to veterans	-	\$ 73,425
Volunteer Service	-	\$ 46, 218
United Fund	-	\$ 5,635
Red Cross	-	\$ 4,506
Cancer research	-	\$ 3,520
Handicap children	-	\$ 10,220
Miscellaneous donations	-	\$ 159,239
Cash aid to needy children	-	\$ 62,406
Value of goods for children	-	\$ 62,775
Firearms safety costs	-	\$ 905
Athletic team costs	-	\$ 132, 039

Volunteer Services totaled 81,103 hours and figures

Veterans Hospitals/homes	-	23,012 hours
Blood donations	-	2,570 pints
Rehabilitation Cases	-	2,806 handled
Community Service	-	52,600 hours
Baseball teams sponsored	-	56
Other athletic events held	-	59

In addition to Post contributions, the Department of Michigan staff provided the following assistance to Michigan families in 2004. These figures are separate from the \$48,000,000 million veterans claim dollars generated by our Service and Rehabilitation Staff via the \$886,100 state grant subsidized by a \$240,400 expenditure from our dues dollars.

- \$17,500 was distributed to Michigan Legionnaires via our National Emergency Fund for reimbursement of natural disaster losses.
- \$20,531 emergency assistance was provided to current active duty military families upon requests from our national toll-free emergency assistance number.
- \$12,246 additional emergency assistance for current active duty military families was given as a result of the follow up work completed by our Department Veterans Service Officers.
- More than \$260,000 worth of Emergency Pediatric Medical Equipment has been distributed by the Department Tabs for Tots program to more

than 116 Michigan hospitals and volunteers ambulance services statewide since 1989.

With 93,000 members statewide, it is often difficult to communicate the scope and public impact of American Legion youth programs such as Baseball, Student Trooper, and Boys State. Several local personal success stories serve as examples.

- Since 1927, Michigan has fielded American Legion Baseball teams statewide, nearly forty in 2004 alone. Statistically, nearly two-thirds of all professional baseball players have played American Legion Baseball. A local example is John Smoltz of the Atlanta Braves. Smoltz, from Warren, Michigan and Lansing's Waverly High School, was selected as the Department's "Most Valuable Player" for the season in which he played American Legion Baseball.
- First Lieutenant Monica Yesh, who currently commands the Michigan State Police Post in Jackson, Michigan, was the first female graduate of our Student Trooper Program to earn "Student Trooper of the Year" honors. The program, funded by the American Legion since 1969, is conducted annually in cooperation with Lansing's Michigan State Police Training Academy. The Department is confident many police officers today have graduated from the program over the years.

From these rapidly expanding beginnings, the American Legion, Department of Michigan, today remains faithful to its origins and to the needs of Michigan veterans and their families. It continues to provide public service and

programs, as well as veteran's advocacy in the Michigan State Legislature, the U.S. Congress, and within the Department of Veterans Affairs.